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ABSTRACT

The report summarizes information from a survey involving 54 state and territory directors of special education who responded to six questions regarding the following: mandated competency testing programs, individuals required to take the test, special procedures used in administering the test, awarding regular or special diplomas to handicapped students, and issuance of certificates of attendance. A table presents survey responses by state. Appended are an annotated bibliography on competency testing, a copy of the Florida Resource Manual for the Development and Evaluation of Programs for Exceptional Students, and sample diplomas. (SBH)

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Competency Testing, Special Education and the Awarding of Diplomas



A Report of Survey Information
Collected by the National Office

and the

North Carolina Department
of Public Instruction
Division for Exceptional Children

National Association of State Directors of
Special Education

1201 16th St., N.W.
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PREFACE

This report is a summary of survey information collected from 54 State Directors of Special Education, who responded to six questions regarding mandated competency testing programs, individuals required to take the test, special procedures used in administering the test, awarding regular or special diplomas to handicapped students, and issuance of certificates of attendance.

Summary comments, collective responses, and individual state responses are included in this report. An extensive bibliography on competency testing is provided in the Appendix.

The survey was initiated by Dr. Ted Drain, Director of Special Education, North Carolina, in August, 1978 and completed by NASDSE in December, 1978.

It is hoped that the information presented below is helpful to SEA personnel who are dealing with competency based testing and its implications.

We acknowledge our appreciation to:

- Margaret Hawischer and Mary Joyce Harper, Winthrop College, South Carolina for permission to reproduce the comprehensive bibliography provided in Appendix A.
- Florida Department of Education for permission to reproduce "A Resource Manual for the Development and Evaluation of Programs for Exceptional Students", Appendix B.
- Utah Department of Education for providing sample certificates of school completion and a Special Certificate offered by Utah LEAs, Appendix C.
- Special appreciation is extended to Jim Linde, NASDSE Intern from George Washington University for tabulating and summarizing the survey data and for his overview comments provided in the text of this report.

James R. Galloway
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COMPETENCY TESTING: AN OVERVIEW, LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

As of January 1, 1979, 36 states (Pipho, 1979) have mandated some form of competency testing program for elementary and secondary students. So far, the question of how special education students are to be treated in these programs has not been well-defined and a number of administrative and possibly legal questions for the future have begun to surface:

- should special education students be included/excluded from comprehensive competency testing programs? What criteria and rationale for either decision must be developed?
- should special procedures be used to administer competency tests to special education students?
- what are the implications for IEP development if handicapped students are included/excluded in competency testing programs?
- what are the implications of awarding regular or "special" diplomas or certificates of attendance to handicapped students?

While this report does not attempt to answer these questions, the data and information provided in this report should be a resource to those SEA administrators who are wrestling with these questions now and for those others who most certainly will confront some of these same questions in the future.

According to the survey results, 17 states link competency testing with high school graduation. Six states require certain categories of handicapped students to participate in these testing programs. Eleven states that link testing with high school graduation have not delineated (according to the survey) if handicapped students are included/excluded from the program.

Seven states, however, have indicated that special procedures in administering competency tests to handicapped students are developed or are in the process of being developed. (Florida's procedures for adapting test administration to handicapped students are provided in Appendix B as a possible resource to other state agencies). Massachusetts is conducting a pilot study to develop procedures for administering tests in a non-discriminatory manner. Vermont is developing guidelines to tailor IEP objectives so that competency requirements can be met on an individual basis.

Legal Issues

A state's decision to include or exclude handicapped students in a competency testing program linked to high school graduation raises a number of legal and administrative questions. For example, requiring handicapped students to take

competency tests that may be discriminatory due to test items, language, culture, format, or administration may lead to legal challenges brought against the state and/or local district.

On the other hand, generally excluding the handicapped student from the testing program may deny the student his/her rights. How then are decisions made to include or exclude handicapped students from the testing program? Decisions may best be made on a case by case basis. To use a set of standards that are established for a general population raises the question of whether a state or local education agency is in compliance with federal mandates calling for evaluations and educational programs tailored to individual needs.

Morrissey (1978) in an address to the American Education Research Association suggests four possible forms of accommodation:

1. Exemption from testing: using the IEP as an indicator of competency
2. Establish different criteria for handicapped students, such as:
 - a. tolerance of lower scores
 - b. the inclusion of teacher ratings, grades to be used with competency test scores to determine overall competency
3. Allow procedural modifications such as environmental adaptations, format modifications, performance adjustments or pacing flexibility.
4. No special accommodation. The student should be allowed to be treated as his non-handicapped peer would be.

Obviously, the question of validity of test results must be raised if accommodation(s) and modification(s) are made for handicapped students. However, the overall validity and reliability of the tests as well as the match between minimum competency tests and instruction provided may lead to legal challenges of the testing program.

What Kinds of Diplomas?

The issuance of diplomas is also an area that may lead to potential legal challenges. For example, non-handicapped students/parents may question the legality of issuing diplomas based on different standards and/or programs.

The survey results indicate a number of practices are being used, nationwide, in awarding diplomas to handicapped students. Thirty-one states issue regular diplomas to handicapped students, while 17 states allow for local board discretion in awarding regular diplomas to handicapped students. Special diplomas may be issued to handicapped students in 15 states depending on local board decisions; nine states issue special certificates of high school attendance while 17 states provide for local board discretion to issue such certificates.

States as well as local districts may well be asked to consider possible discriminatory effects of issuing a diploma other than those awarded to the

general population. Trochtenberg (1977) suggests that the denial of a standard diploma without proper remediation attempts could be challenged on the basis of deprivation of liberty without fair and reasonable procedures. The standard diploma as a property right also needs to be considered, as well as procedures for withholding it through proper procedural mechanisms.

Clearly, states and local districts need to be aware of the legal implications of their decision on competency testing. Will the decision(s) made be in compliance with the federal laws as well as state statutes? How can we accommodate individual needs? What procedures can be used that will not cause discrimination or deny individual rights? What role can the IEP play in this process? Certainly, the answers will not come easily or quickly. What is evident is the need for proactive collaborative exploration of these issues.

James C. Linde
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SUMMARY NOTES

1. Does your state mandate a competency test prior to high school graduation?

- 17 states indicated that their state has mandated a competency test prior to high school graduation.
- 1 state indicated that it is the local board's decision on whether to require a competency test prior to high school graduation.
- 36 states indicated there is no requirement for competency testing prior to high school graduation at this time.

Mandated:

California	New Mexico
Connecticut - 1979	New York
Delaware	North Carolina
Florida	South Carolina
Hawaii - 1983	Tennessee - 1982
Maryland	Vermont
Missouri	Virginia
Nebraska	Utah
New Hampshire	

No Requirement:

Alabama	Iowa	North Dakota
Alaska	Kansas	Ohio
American Samoa	Kentucky	Oklahoma
Arizona	Louisiana	Oregon
Arkansas	Maine	Pennsylvania
BIA	Massachusetts	Puerto Rico
Colorado	Michigan	Rhode Island
District of Columbia	Minnesota	South Carolina
Georgia	Mississippi	Texas
Guam	Montana	Washington
Illinois	Nevada	West Virginia
Indiana	New Jersey	Wisconsin

Local Board Decision:

Idaho

2. Which of the following handicapped students are required to take the test:

educable mentally handicapped?
trainable mentally handicapped?
specific learning disabled?
speech and/or language impaired?
seriously emotionally handicapped?
visually impaired?
hearing impaired?
orthopedically impaired?
multiply handicapped?

- 6 states indicated that all or designated handicapped students are required to take the mandated test.

California - all

Florida - speech and/or language impaired
visually impaired
orthopedically impaired

Maryland - all (levels I, II, III of state continuum)

Massachusetts - decided by core evaluation team

New York - (if mentally capable)
specific learning disabled
speech and/or language impaired
seriously emotionally handicapped
visually impaired
hearing impaired
orthopedically impaired
multiply handicapped

Vermont - all

3. Do you have special information or procedures in giving the competency test to handicapped students?

- 4 states reported special information and/or procedures are currently being developed.
- 3 states report that special information and/or procedures are currently available.

California - paper to be ready in January, 1979

Florida - procedures in place

Hawaii - procedures to be developed by 1983

Massachusetts - pilot study being conducted to develop procedures for administering tests within schools in a non-discriminatory manner

Nebraska - general in nature - not specific to handicapping conditions

New York - procedures in place

Vermont - procedures being developed

4. Do you issue regular diplomas to handicapped students?

- 31 states reported that they issue regular diplomas to handicapped students.
- 17 states reported that it is left up to the local board's discretion on whether to issue regular diplomas to handicapped students.
- 1 state reported it does not issue regular diplomas to handicapped students.

Yes

Alabama
American Samoa
BIA
Delaware
District of Columbia
Florida
Guam
Hawaii
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa

Kentucky
Louisiana
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
New Jersey
New York
North Carolina

Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Puerto Rico
Rhode Island
Texas
Utah
Vermont
Washington

No

Mississippi

Local Board Decision

Alaska
Arizona
Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut

Georgia
Maine
Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Hampshire

New Mexico
South Dakota
Tennessee
Virginia
Wisconsin

5. Do you issue a special diploma to handicapped students?

- 1 state reported it does issue special diplomas to handicapped students.
- 12 states reported that they do not issue special diplomas to handicapped students.
- 15 states reported it is left to the local board's discretion on whether to issue special diplomas to handicapped students.

Yes

Florida

Local Board Decision

Arizona
Connecticut
Georgia
Mississippi
Missouri

Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Mexico
Pennsylvania

Rhode Island
South Dakota
Tennessee
Utah
Virginia

6. Do you issue a special certificate of high school attendance to handicapped students not receiving a diploma?

- 9 states reported they issue special certificates of high attendance to handicapped students.
- 18 states reported they do not issue special certificates of high school attendance to handicapped students.
- 17 states reported that it is left to the local board's discretion whether to issue special certificates of high school attendance to handicapped students.

Yes

District of Columbia	Kentucky	North Carolina
Florida	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania
Hawaii (1983)	New Hampshire	Oregon

No

Alaska	Idaho	New York
American Samoa	Louisiana	Oklahoma
Arizona	Maryland	Puerto Rico
BIA	Michigan	Texas
Delaware	Nebraska	Vermont
Guam	New Jersey	Washington

Local Board's Decision

California	Maine	South Dakota
Colorado	Missouri	Tennessee
Connecticut	Montana	Utah
Georgia	New Mexico	Virginia
Indiana	Nevada	Wisconsin
Louisiana	North Dakota	
(Orleans Parrish only)		

COMPETENCY TESTING/AWARDING OF DIPLOMAS
Survey of State Directors of Special Education
Summary by States

Alabama	No competency test at the present time. The State Board of Education has appointed a committee to work on competency testing in the near future. It is not known which exceptional children will be included. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students completing the prescribed course of study.
Alaska	No competency test. Some LEAs issue regular diplomas to handicapped students.
American Samoa	No competency test at the present time. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students mainstreamed in regular secondary setting.
Arizona	No competency test. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas or special diplomas to handicapped students.
Arkansas	No competency test. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas to handicapped students.
California	Competency tests are mandated. A technical assistance paper will be developed by January, 1979, for use in administering competency tests to handicapped students. Local districts have the option in issuing regular diplomas or certificates of high school attendance to handicapped students. The diploma/certificates may not contain distinguishing marks or statements which state or imply limited ability or performance.
Colorado	No competency test. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas to handicapped students; however, most do. Special certificates are issued in some local districts. Denver Public Schools grants a "Work/Study Diploma".

Connecticut	Competency tests will be given in 1979. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas, special diplomas, or special certificates to handicapped students.
Delaware	State mandates performance based graduation requirements be met but the program has not been implemented by the districts. Which students take the test depends on the IEP. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
District of Columbia	No competency test. Regular diplomas are awarded to handicapped students able to complete the required carnegie units. Other students receive special certificates.
Florida	Competency tests are required. Special information/procedures on administering competency tests to handicapped is available. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
Georgia	No competency test. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas, special diplomas, or special certificates to handicapped students.
Guam	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
Hawaii	Competency tests or equivalent are mandated for 1983, to receive a high school diploma. Any student, including the handicapped may take the test. Handicapped students will not be required to take the test. Those choosing not to take the test will be awarded a "certificate of completion on an individually prescribed program".
Idaho	Local board decision on whether to use competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
Illinois	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped children.

Indiana	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students, but some districts do issue special certificates, also.
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Iowa	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
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Kansas	No competency test at the present time. The 1978 Legislature charged the Kansas State Board of Education with developing standards and guidelines for competency based testing. The proposed procedures are to be implemented on a pilot basis only in selected school districts during the 1978-79 school year. The general policy adopted by the Board would exclude handicapped students.
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Kentucky	No competency test. The General Assembly in Kentucky recently passed the Educational Improvement Act which requires a testing program in grades 3, 5, 7, and 10, with a remedial program developed as a result of that testing. Exceptional children who are receiving part of their instruction in a regular program or whose teachers feel that they can take the Standardized Achievement Test will be tested; however, their test results will be scored separately and reported separately from the rest of the students in the school program. Students who meet graduation requirements of 18 carnegie units will receive regular diplomas. The severely and profoundly handicapped students will receive a certificate upon completion of their individualized education programs.
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Louisiana	No competency test at the present time. A committee has just begun the process of developing competency tests. They will determine what areas of exceptionalities will be evaluated, which special aids or assistance will be needed, and what separate minimum standards will need to be developed. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students who meet graduation requirements. Orleans Parish is the only school system that issues certificates to special education students unable to meet the requirements. A committee is studying the issuance of dual diplomas.
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Maine	No competency tests are mandated. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas, special diplomas, special certificates to handicapped children.
Maryland	Competency testing is mandated (1982). All mainstreamed students in levels I, II, III will take the test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
Massachusetts	Basic skills competency program passed by Board of Education, but graduation is not tied to it. Core evaluation team decides whether a child should be excluded from the test. Pilot study is being implemented to develop procedures for administering tests. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students. Local boards may issue special certificate of high school attendance.
Michigan	No competency testing has been mandated. Handicapped students are awarded regular diplomas.
Minnesota	No competency test is required. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
Mississippi	No competency test is required. Regular diplomas are not issued to handicapped students. School districts decide on special diploma to be issued.
Missouri	Competency testing has been mandated. Handicapped students may be awarded regular diplomas as well as special diplomas. It is up to the local boards' discretion to issue special certificates.
Montana	No competency tests. It is up to the local boards' discretion to award regular diplomas or special diplomas to handicapped students. Special certificates may also be awarded handicapped students.

Nebraska	Competency testing is mandated prior to high school graduation. LEAs have prerogative of issuing regular or special diplomas to handicapped students.
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Nevada	No competency tests. The local boards decide on whether to award regular or special diplomas or special certificates.
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New Hampshire	Competency testing is mandated. The issuance of regular diplomas to handicapped students is the LEA prerogative. Special certificates may be issued to handicapped students.
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New Jersey	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students upon completion of their IEPs.
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New Mexico	Competency testing is state mandated. LEAs have the option of issuing regular or special diplomas or special certificates.
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New York	Competency testing is state mandated. Regular diplomas are issued handicapped students.
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North Carolina	Competency testing is mandated. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students. Students who fail the high school competency test four times will receive certificates.
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North Dakota	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students in most school districts. Some school districts issue special certificates, but this practice is discouraged. Handicapped students are exempt from secondary requirements if need for adapted program is shown on IEP.
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Ohio	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
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Oklahoma	Competency testing is not mandated. Regular diplomas are issued handicapped students.
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Oregon	Competency testing is not mandated. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students. The state is moving towards the issuance of a certificate of competence. No document may have a label of handicap on it.
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Pennsylvania	No competency test at the present time. Legislation is proposed. Regular diplomas are issued to most handicapped students. However, students in the TMR program and program for the severely and profoundly handicapped receive a special certificate or special diploma. The entire area is under discussion currently.
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Puerto Rico	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
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Rhode Island	No competency tests are mandated. Local boards have perogative on issuing regular diplomas, special diplomas, certificates of attendance.
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South Carolina	Competency testing was recently mandated through legislation, but procedures for implementation are not fully known at this time.
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South Dakota	No competency test. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas, special diplomas, or special certificates to handicapped students.
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Tennessee	Competency testing is mandated to begin in 1982. Regular diplomas may be issued to handicapped students. Local board decision on whether to issue special diplomas or special certificates.
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Texas	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
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Utah	Competency tests have been passed by the State Board but not yet implemented statewide. State has not determined which handicapped students will take the test; state superintendent has said special education students may be exempted from tests. Regular diplomas, special diplomas and special certificates of attendance may be issued to handicapped students upon the discretion of the local district.
Vermont	Competency tests are mandated. Students are required to take the tests. Regular diplomas are issued handicapped students. Special certificates of attendance may be issued.
Virginia	Competency testing is mandated. A list of considerations and examples that school districts should use when testing for minimum competency is currently being developed. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas, special diplomas, or special certificates to handicapped students.
Washington	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued to handicapped students.
West Virginia	No competency test.
Wisconsin	No competency test. Local board decision on whether to issue regular diplomas or special certificates to handicapped students.
Wyoming	Competency standards for graduation are being developed currently. Although the standards have not been completed, competency testing as such <u>will not be required</u> . LEAs will implement standards adopted by the State Board, using their own specific criteria, procedures, etc.
BIA	No competency test. Regular diplomas are issued handicapped students.

COMPETENCY TESTING

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A RESOURCE MANUAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION
OF
PROGRAMS FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

VOLUME I-B: FLORIDA STATUTES AND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RULES:
EXCERPTS FOR PROGRAMS FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

NEW LAWS AND RULES
April 1 - September 6, 1978

Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students
Division of Public Schools



State of Florida
Department of Education
Tallahassee, Florida
Ralph D. Turlington, Commissioner
an equal opportunity employer

1978

This public document was promulgated at an annual cost of \$405.23 or .54 per copy to provide an update of new Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules pertaining to the education of exceptional students.

This is a new rule.

6A-1.943 Modification of test instruments and procedures for exceptional students. Each school board shall implement appropriate modifications of the test instruments and test procedures established for high school graduation, pursuant to Rule 6A-1.942, FAC, for exceptional students within the limits prescribed herein:

(1) Such modifications shall include:

(a) Flexible scheduling. The student may be administered a test during several brief sessions, so long as all testing is completed by the final allowed test date specified by the Commissioner.

(b) Flexible setting. The student may be administered a test individually or in a small group setting by a proctor rather than in a classroom or auditorium setting.

(c) Recording of answers. The student may mark answers in a test booklet, type the answers by machine, or indicate the selected answers to a test proctor. The proctor may then transcribe the student's responses onto a machine-scoreable answer sheet.

(d) Revised format. The student may use a large print booklet, a Braille test booklet, or a magnifying device.

(e) Auditory aids. The student may use audio devices. A tape recorded version of appropriate portions of the test may be used, along with printed copy. Appropriate portions of the test may also be read to the student by a narrator. However, no portion of a test which is specifically designed to measure reading skills may be tested through use of audio aids.

(2) The following modifications are authorized, when determined appropriate by the superintendent or his or her designee, for any student who has been properly evaluated and classified, pursuant to Rule 6A-6.331,

6A-1.943 Modification of test instruments and procedures for exceptional students. [Continued]

FAC, in one (1) or more of the exceptional student categories below:

(a) Mentally retarded:

1. Flexible scheduling.
2. Flexible setting.
3. Recording of answers.

(b) Specific learning disabled:

1. Flexible scheduling.
2. Flexible setting.
3. Recording of answers.
4. Revised format.
5. Auditory aids.

(c) Visually impaired:

1. Flexible setting.
2. Recording of answers.
3. Revised format.
4. Auditory aids.
5. Flexible scheduling.

(d) Hearing impaired: None

(e) Physically impaired:

1. Flexible scheduling.
2. Flexible setting.
3. Recording of answers.
4. Revised format.

(f) Emotionally handicapped:

1. Flexible scheduling.
2. Flexible setting.
3. Recording of answers.

6A-1.943 Modification of test instruments and procedures for exceptional students. /Continued/

4. Revised format.

(g) Speech and language impaired: None.

(h) Gifted: None.

(i) Hospitalized and homebound:

1. Flexible scheduling.

2. Flexible setting.

3. Recording of answers.

4. Auditory aids.

(3) In no case shall the modifications authorized herein be interpreted or construed as an authorization to provide a student with assistance in interpreting or solving any test item.

(4) The division of public schools shall develop the modified test instruments required herein, and provide technical assistance to school districts in the implementation of modified test instruments and the determination of appropriate modifications for individual students.

Specific Authority 120.53(1)(b), 229.053(1), 232.246(2), FS.
Law Implemented 120.53(1)(b), 232.246(2) FS. History - New



CERTIFICATE OF SCHOOL COMPLETION

Hartvigsen School

GRANITE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Presented to

Date of Award

Teacher

Principal

Jordan School District

Jordan Valley School

Certificate of Completion

Presented to

For successful completion of the prescribed courses
necessary for graduation.

Issued this _____ day of _____ 19____.

SUPERINTENDENT

PRINCIPAL

-43-

Alpine School District

This Certifies that

has completed a Course of Study prescribed by the Board of
Education of the Alpine School District and is hereby awarded this

Special Certificate

Dated this twenty-fifth day of May, 1978



Russell P. Hansen
PRESIDENT

Sam H. Peterson
SUPERINTENDENT

Kent J. Abel
CLERK

PRINCIPAL